

26th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest

To: 7th -12th grade Public Education, Charter and Private Schools
From: Edie Park, Education Specialist, Educational Equity Section
Date: October 5, 2009
RE: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest

You are invited to have your students participate in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest sponsored by the Utah State Office of Education, Educational Equity Section. This contest is open to all students in grades 7 – 12.

Deadline: Essays must be Postmarked or Emailed electronic copy by November 17, 2009.

If you have further questions please contact Edie Park at (801) 538-7640 or edie.park@schools.utah.gov

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. ESSAY CONTEST

This year's theme is:

“How do you believe Dr. Martin Luther King’s vision impacted President Obama’s Message to American Students and what did it teach you about your personal responsibility as an American School Aged Student?”

In honor of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. the Utah State Office of Education, Educational Equity will again sponsor the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest. This is one way for young people to continue to find new meaning and application for the legacy which Dr. King left to the world in the area of human and civil rights.

In order to assist students in gaining a greater understanding and appreciation of Dr. King's life, the Utah State Office of Education and the Educational Equity Section invite you to participate in this year's essay contest.

AWARDS: \$50.00 cash prizes will be awarded to the winner in each grade level, 7-12. From the grade level winners, two grand prize winners of \$125.00 will be selected – one junior high student and one high school student. Winners will be invited to attend a keynote address and a luncheon in their honor on **January 14, 2010** at the Granite School District Offices, where they will receive their awards.

THEME: ***“How do you believe Dr. Martin Luther King’s vision impacted President Obama’s Message to American Students and what did it teach you about your personal responsibility as an American School Aged Student?”*** is the theme of this year’s contest. Students should study the writings and speeches of Dr. King. They should have an understanding of what Dr. King valued and believed, what he preached and taught, and how our society is different because of his legacy. What was the impact on President Obama and you, the student? Students should write their essays on both the challenges and opportunities that our society will encounter in the next 100 years.

Teachers are encouraged to facilitate classroom discussion on the theme and suggest that students discuss the topic with their families. This may help students focus on their own experiences and assist them in forming ideas, opinions, and answers useful in their essays. Enclosed is a page on theme development that can be used as a catalyst to assist students in writing their essays.

FORMAT: All essays must be 500 words or less **typed and double-spaced** .

- NO cover sheet or report covers
- DO NOT STAPLE THE ESSAY
- DO NOT TYPE STUDENT NAME ON THE FRONT OF THE ESSAY
- The student should write his or her name and other pertinent information on the **registration form only and PAPERCLIP it to the essay.**
- Essays will be judged on content, clarity, continuity, unity, relationship to theme, effectiveness, and mechanics.
- Please make a copy of this instruction sheet to give to each student wishing to participate.
- **DEADLINE: Postmarked or emailed by November 17, 2009.**

Theme Development:

Students should focus on the similarities between Dr. King Jr.'s vision for the Country compared and contrast with President Obama's speech to school students.

- Students should focus on how we as a nation can eliminate racism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and violence – the things that Dr. King challenged us to eliminate from our society.
- A well-written essay should both inform and motivate.
- In addition, essays will be judged on creativity and the author's ability to offer personal insights, show new ways to look at issues, and propose original solutions to unsolved problems.

Dr. King believed that individuals should and could make a difference in bringing about equal rights and justice for all.

ENTRY PROCESS

Attach entry form to front of essay and mail to:

**Amanda Charlesworth
Utah State Office of Education
Educational Equity Section
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200
(801) 538-7640**

RIGHTS: By participating in the contest, participants give the Utah State Office of Education the right to reproduce essays for publicity purposes.

Entries will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

*****Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest Entry Form*****

STOP – PLEASE DO NOT STAPLE THIS FORM TO YOUR ESSAY.

DETACH AND PAPERCLIP THIS PAGE TO YOUR ESSAY.

**MAIL THIS PAGE AND YOUR ESSAY DIRECTLY TO THE ADDRESS ON THE
INFORMATION SHEET.**

Student's Name: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Student's School: _____

School Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

School Phone: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

SCORE

_____ CONTENT

_____ CLARITY

_____ CONTINUITY

_____ UNITY

_____ RELATIONSHIP TO THEME

_____ EFFECTIVENESS

_____ MECHANICS

_____ TOTAL SCORE

Definition of Terms

CONTENT: Content is the student's idea (thesis). Essays should generate fresh, independent ideas in the application of Dr. King's ideas to the issues of racism, discrimination and justice. The ideas should be sustained and developed throughout the essay.

CLARITY: Clarity is the straightforwardness of the student's explanation of how Dr. King's vision impacts his/her life.

CONTINUITY: Continuity is the orderly progression of an essay from one thought to the next. Usually, this is apparent in the essay's flow and growth from one paragraph to the next. An essay with continuity "feels" like an idea is growing. Ideas, examples, and paraphrasing should be presented in a manner and sequence that is not changeable.

RELATIONSHIP TO THEME: The essay fulfills the purpose of the topic. Students should measure their own lives and goals beside the vision, principles and beliefs of Dr. King. The essay ***does not either digress or inappropriately dwell*** on Dr. King's ideas or contemporary issues. The essay sustains a focus on how each student can apply Dr. King's ideas to his/her own life, along with the theme, ***"How do you believe Dr. Martin Luther King's vision impacted President Obama's Message to American Students and what did it teach you about your personal responsibility as an American School Aged Student"***.

UNITY: Unity includes the essay's diction, metaphors, images, tone, and all matters of style. These matters need to be consistent and make the essay's content (ideas) more effective. Unity includes the appropriateness of rhetorical devices such as questions, hyperbole, understatement, sentence structures, and inductive/deductive development of paragraphs.

MECHANICS: Mechanics includes all matters of standard English. Besides correctness, mechanics are best thought of as how well the writer utilizes the resources of grammar and usage to create an effect and make clear his/her point.

EFFECTIVENESS: Effectiveness includes evaluating the essay's success at creating an effect. Have we been moved and brought to a new insight, a new clarity of feeling and thought? The most effective essays avoid overwriting (the excessive and inappropriate use of language to shock and draw attention).

BOOKS ABOUT MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Bennett, Lerone, Jr. *What Manner of Man*. New York: Pocket Books, 1968. The author, like Dr. King, is also a graduate of Morehouse College. He collected many of his materials from personal interviews with Dr. King, his wife, relatives, and close friends. The "I Have a Dream" speech and the acceptance statement by Dr. King when he received the Nobel Prize on December 10, 1964 are included.

Bishop, Jim. *The Days of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971. Jim Bishop discovered that writing about Dr. King became one of the most engrossing jobs of his career. He selected the twelve years from Montgomery to Memphis as the period about which to write. This 516-page book is a thorough account of Dr. King's activities and of perceptions of people who knew him. Interesting insights into James Earl Ray, the man who was convicted for the assassination of Dr. King, are revealed.

***Ebony* Editors. *Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929-1968: An Ebony Picture Biography*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1968.** The editors selected photographs from the *Ebony* photograph file to assemble the book. It includes Dr. Benjamin Mays' eulogy at the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ellis, Mary. *Black Experience: American Blacks Since 1865*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1974. The author discusses Dr. King's use of nonviolence.

Fisher, William H. *Free At Last: A Bibliography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1977. The 169-page book is an annotated listing of many books and articles by and about Dr. King. It lists manuscript collection materials, monographs, and selections from the Congressional Record. The bibliography is extensive.

Flynn, James J. *Negroes of Achievement in Modern America*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1970. The book is a collection of short biographies of contemporary Black Americans in such fields as broadcasting, manufacturing, education and politics. Dr. King is included among the biographies.

Haskins, James. *The Life and Death of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, Co., 1977. Part I of the book begins with King's early years and ends with the fading of the civil rights movement. Part II begins with the assassination of Dr. King and ends with an exploration of as-yet-unanswered questions.

Links to video's of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's speeches and to President Obama's message to American Students

Martin Luther King Jr's speeches - <http://www.mlkonline.net/>

President Obama's message to American Students - <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/A-Message-of-Hope-and-Responsibility-for-Americas-Students/>

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s

Principles of Nonviolence

Nonviolent resistance is not a method for cowards.

Though not physically aggressive toward his opponent, the nonviolent resister constantly seeks to persuade an opponent that he is wrong.

Nonviolence does not seek to defeat or humiliate an opponent but aims to win his friendship and understanding.

The nonviolent attack is directed at the forces of evil, rather than against people who happen to be doing evil.

Nonviolent resistance is a willingness to accept blows from an opponent without striking back.

Nonviolent resistance avoids not only external physical violence but also internal violence of the spirit. One not only refuses to shoot his opponent but also refuses to hate him.

Nonviolent resistance is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice, resulting in a deep faith in the future.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Stride Toward Freedom

New York: Harper & Row, 1958

I Have a Dream

by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise, that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check: a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vault of opportunity in this nation. So we have come to cash this check – a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot, to remind America of the fierce urgency of NOW. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. NOW is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation, to the sunlit path of racial justice. NOW is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. NOW is the time to lift our nation from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negroes' legitimate discontent will not pass, until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. 1963 is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America

until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation, until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied, as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied, until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our modern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plains and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

***Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.
From every mountainside, let freedom ring.***

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual,

***"Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are
free at last!"***